

Birds are the most visible animals visitors are likely to encounter at Pinnacles National Park, with over 160 species documented in the park since 1908. Turkey vultures circle and soar in the skies overhead, while acorn woodpeckers and Steller's jays call noisily among the pines and oaks near the visitor centers. In the winter, dark-eyed juncos and California towhees perch and forage around willows and underbrush. In the spring and summer, black-headed grosbeaks and warbling vireos sing loudly from oaks and pines as they set up nesting territories.

The variety of habitat types at Pinnacles attracts a diverse assemblage of birds to the park for seasonal nesting and migratory stopovers, and numerous species live in the park year-round. Much of the bird diversity at Pinnacles is focused along the riparian corridors of Bear Gulch and Chalone Creek, because they provide an abundance of food, water, and shelter for many species. In spring and summer, house wrens, black phoebes, yellow warblers, yellow-breasted chats, lazuli buntings, and varied thrushes are active in shaded riparian areas. Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks maneuver agilely through the trees in search of prey, and mallards and belted kingfishers are seen occasionally along the creeks and at the reservoir every year.

Certain species favor the pine and oak woodlands in the park. Among the gray pines, western tanagers, Townsend's warblers, and hairy woodpeckers are evident. In the oak woodlands, California quail, oak titmice, western scrub jays, mourning doves, ash-throated flycatchers, and northern flickers are commonly seen.

The dense, low scrub of the chaparral covers the majority of the park, and provides ideal habitat for many birds, including residents like California thrashers, spotted towhees, wrentits, and bushtits, and seasonal species including sage sparrows.

The rocky summits and peaks of Pinnacles provide nesting habitat and roosts for many raptors, including prairie falcons and golden eagles, as well as smaller bird species including the vocal canyon wren and the acrobatic violet-green swallow. At night, the haunting calls of great-horned owls can be heard echoing off the cliff walls.

Resource management staff at Pinnacles, study bird populations through raptor monitoring, small bird point counts, and California condor reintroduction efforts. For detailed information on the projects, refer to the Highlights section on the left side of this page.